

There are five sins which St Paul said people need to “wake up” from in order to follow Christ.

Firstly, he mentions “**drunken orgies**” not because they’ve gone to bed with a hangover, but to “wake up” in a spiritual sense. St Paul warns about this sin, (as he does about all five sins as we’ll see), within the context of the need to “**wake up**” because our salvation is near.

Becoming saved by Christ does not happen automatically.

We need to cooperate with this gift.

If we are not prepared to, then we are going to want to *escape* from what God is asking of us.

To “wake up” means that we need to *receive* and *respond* to the gift Jesus wishes to give to us on one hand,

and to *reject* what comes from the enemy on the other.

In short, to “wake up” means to be *responsible*.

This contrasts greatly with those who get drunk because drinking excessive alcohol is often motivated by a desire to *escape* from responsibility.

You may not have a particular problem with alcohol, but if you were to temporise what St Paul is saying here, then you could see how this form of substance abuse can just as much be applied to any other form of *escape* in our own day and age. Such escapes involve having recourse to something in a disordered way.

For example, do you pursue any of the following things excessively as a means of escape?

- television;
- computer games;
- social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, emails, text messages, and so on;
- phone conversations; and
- gambling.

None of those things I just mentioned are sinful if you had recourse to them with moderation, just as there’s nothing sinful with drinking alcohol with moderation.

So, in summary, I invite you to ask yourself the following questions:

- *What do I do to relax after I’ve been under pressure?*
- *After turning to such things, do they fail to satisfy and fulfil me?*
- *Do I turn to anything excessively such that I become irresponsible in my relationship with Jesus and others?*

Another form of escape which St Paul warns us about is “**promiscuity.**”

Many sexual addictions often begin among those who have failed to manage their stress in a positive way.

Being aware of our emotional

responses is important because when a person struggles sexually alone or with others it usually stems from an emotional problem, not from one’s sexuality itself. I will speak more about this later because being attentive to what’s going on inside ourselves not only helps us to avoid this sin, but all the other sins St Paul warns us about today.

The next sin St Paul warns us about is “**licentiousness.**”

It comes from the word, *licence*. A licentious person sees himself as having a licence to do *whatever* he wants and *whenever* he wants, even if it’s morally wrong.

This escape is certainly of the worst kind because it’s an escape from reality itself!

Next, St Paul mentions “**wrangling.**” The word he writes in Greek is *komos* which can also be translated as *revelry*.

It's the word that describes a noisy band of revellers who sweep their way through the city streets at night.

Such behaviour is also an escape from responsibility.

You might not belong to a bikie gang, or any other subculture noted for such revelry, but you can still escape from responsibility by attending parties which are commendable and good in and of themselves if you are attending them all too often.

An over-active social life could be symptomatic of a desire to escape from responsibility.

As you can see, escaping from responsibility is often marked by *excessiveness*.

Lastly, St Paul warns against **"jealousy."**

He's describing what begrudges a person from being able to be content with what he has. Such a person looks with jealous

eye on every blessing given to someone else as something denied to himself.

At this point, you might be asking yourself: "*How is jealousy an escape?*"

St Paul includes jealousy among the five sins he warns us about today, because it has something in common with them; namely: it prevents us from responding to God's grace.

A person who does not respond is not *response-able*.

As you can see, the word "responsible" comes from the word, "respond."

Jealousy prevents a person to respond to God's grace because it involves a *lack of hope*.

Jealousy thereby leads to wanting to escape from responsibility.

Let me give you some examples so that you can understand how

jealously is related to a lack of hope. A jealous person will think to himself something like this:

"If only *I* had of thought of that idea. Had *I* come up with it, *I* would have been the one who got the pay-rise, not my work-mate." Such a person is not responding in hope to the love of God, for he has placed his hope not on God, but on himself.

Look at how this contrasts with a another work colleague who is not jealous.

This person is grateful for the idea that his colleague conceived because it added value to the business.

This person is grateful because the object of his hope, is not himself, but God who alone can fulfil the desire of our hearts. A grateful person, then, knows that anything good that he or another person accomplishes comes from God.

Accordingly, a grateful person will praise God for the good he sees in others.

In contrast, a person lacking in gratitude will be jealous of the gifts of others because he has the habit attributing goodness to himself. Consequently, a jealous person will fall into the trap of looking for an escape that is more or less harmful to compensate for his discontent.

To avoid the trap of disordered compensatory responses, we need to be attentive to the emotions which take place within the depths of our heart.

Being aware of these emotions helps us to check whether or not the disordered inclinations we are experiencing may be a compensatory response to situations that we find difficult to cope with, or situations of repressed emotions such as a feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, humiliation, over-work, un-appreciation, or from personal stresses and suffering,

such as disappointments,
and so forth.

Such a person needs to “wake up”
as St Paul said, to how Christ alone
can fulfil the deepest desires of the
heart; otherwise, he will be deceived
into turning to what simply cannot.

So, you would do well to ask
yourself the questions:

- *What distracts me from spending
valuable time with my family and
other people I am responsible
for?*
- *Are there any escape
mechanisms in my life which I
set in place to avoid work
commitments and other duties
and responsibilities?*
- *What comforts do I turn to when
I would be doing better to put
everything down to pray?*
- *If you are jealous about the
blessings God the Father has*

*given others, have you
considered that God bestows
such blessings not so much to
glorify them, but to glorify His
Son in and through them?*

St Augustine’s conversion
experience has made these words of
St Paul about the need to “wake up”
famous.

He tells the story in his *Confessions*.
He was walking in the garden.
His heart was in distress,
because of his failure to live the
good life.

He kept exclaiming miserably,
**“How long? How long?
Tomorrow and tomorrow – why
not now? Why not this hour an
end to my depravity?”**

Suddenly, he heard a voice saying,
“Take and read; take and read.”
It sounded like a child’s voice;
and he racked his mind to try to
remember any child’s game in which
these words occurred,

but could think of none.
He hurried back to the seat where
his friend Alypius was sitting,
for he had left there a volume of
St Paul’s writings.

**“I snatched it up and read
silently the first passage my
eyes fell upon: ‘Let us live
decently as people do in the
daytime:
no drunken orgies,
no promiscuity or
licentiousness,
and no wrangling or jealousy.
Let your armour be the Lord
Jesus Christ.’
I neither wished nor needed to
read further.
With the end of that sentence,
as though the light of assurance
had poured into my heart,
all the shades of doubt were
scattered.”**

Through his word,
God spoke to Augustine.

His conversion was so powerful
because Augustine had led his life
focused so much on himself; yet,
in this moment, his focus changed,
because he began to be attentive to
God.

Jesus warns those who pay no
attention to God on account of
being absorbed by the things of this
world.

He tells us that the time will come
with shattering suddenness on those
who are trying to escape from being
responsible for their behaviour by
placing a false hope in anything
other than God.